

François Louis Thomas Francia



Shipping in the port of Dunkirk with the Leughenaer tower

Reference: 10998

Dimensions:

Height: 20.40 cm / 8 in

Width: 29.40 cm / 11⁵/₈ in

Signed c.r.: Francia, watercolour over traces of pencil with scratching out and touches of bodycolour, numbered verso: No 44.

20.4 x 29.4 cm

Provenance

Baron François Adolphe Akermann, régent of the Banque de France and his wife Louise Marie née Boquet de Saint-Simon, the Chateau de Coulonges, Rahay, Sarthe, France, by direct descent until 2018

An important addition to Francia's known oeuvre, this drawing shows the busy port of Dunkirk with loggers moving their wood in the foreground in front of a variety of moored boats. The Leughenaer, or Liar's Tower, on the right of the

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composition, is one of the most famous monuments in Dunkirk and continues to dominate the old port. It was erected by Jacques Desfontaines in 1405 and is Dunkirk's oldest surviving building. Originally part of the port's fortifications, it became Dunkirk's first lighthouse at the end of the eighteenth century. The Leughenaer is 30 metres high and overlooks Minck Square, the site of the old fish market. Between 1814 and 1823 the top section with a search light was added to the tower.

There is a drawing by Francia dating from around 1824, now in the collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dunkirk, which shows the tower from the quay on the right hand side of the present watercolour (see Louis Francia' Musée des Beaux-Arts, Calais 1988/89, no. 79).

Francia was Bonington's teacher whose work provides an important link between British and French watercolour painting in the early nineteenth century. A native of Calais, he left for London in 1788 after the outbreak of the French Revolution and remained until 1817. He established a practise as a drawing master in London and a reputation as a painter of marine and landscape watercolours. He attended the Monro 'academy', made sketching tours, was secretary of the Brothers, a sketching club of which Girtin was a member and was also secretary of the Associated Artists in Water Colours. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1795-1822. He returned to Calais in 1817. He gave Bonington his first professional lessons in watercolour in Calais as well as other artists including William Wyld, Eugène Isabey, Tesson and Collignon. British and French artists who passed through the town on a tour of the coast or en route to Paris or London would visit him.

Baron François Adolphe Ackerman (1809-1890) was born in Paris and followed his grandfather and father into the world of finance becoming receveur général des Finances for the department of the Dordogne in 1834 at the age of twenty-five. He was an able financier and rebuilt the family estate at Coulonges, Rahay, Sarthe also becoming mayor of Rahay. He became deputy governor of the Banque de France in December 1870 and régent of the Banque de France on 27 January 1871, holding the office until his death. He was painted by Winterhalter. He and his wife had two daughters one of whom, Henrietta, married Vicomte Henri de Bouillé.